

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers

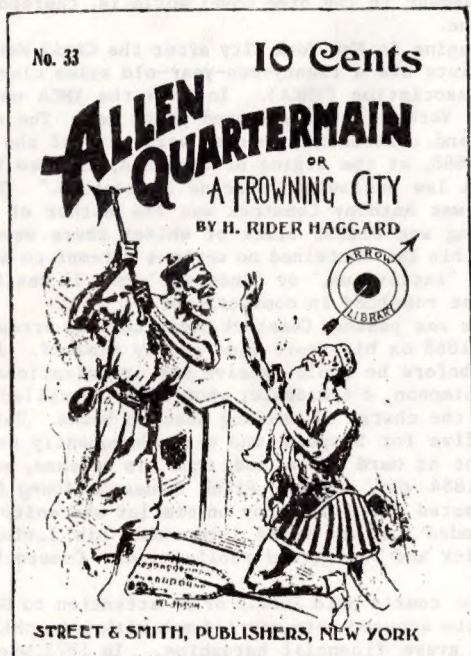
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ANTHONY COMSTOCK'S LIFELONG CRUSADE AGAINST "VAMPIRE LITERATURE"

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ANTHONY COMSTOCK'S LIFELONG CRUSADE AGAINST "VAMPIRE LITERATURE"*

By Lydia Cushman Schurman — Copyright © 1989

The story of Anthony Comstock and the dime novel publishing world—his acts of suppression and virulent written attacks—has, as yet, not been written. Yet, this 19th century progenitor of Senator Joseph McCarthy in our own era, wielded immense influence over the story papers and dime novels of a century ago and dramatically affected the lives and earnings of their newsdealers and publishers. Comstock seized their property and destroyed it at will; he arrested them, questioned them, imprisoned them; he crushed businesses as easily as he crushed lives.

What Comstock did in the dime novel field, he did, also, in the world at large. He outlawed classics as "obscene"—for example, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Rousseau's *Confessions*. He confiscated art books, photographs of art works, and even reproductions of paintings which had been on exhibit as "lascivious." His involvement in the dime novel world is, therefore, a microcosm of the larger scene.

The story begins in New York City after the Civil War had ended, and its main protagonists are a twenty-one-year-old sales clerk and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). In 1866 the YMCA made a survey of conditions in New York as they affected young men. The survey revealed "vile newspapers and...licentious books" were part of the problem.¹ Two years later, in 1868, at the urging of the YMCA, the New York State Legislature passed a law outlawing "obscene literature." The young sales clerk whose name was Anthony Comstock was the author of this law.² To Comstock everything was either black or white; there were no shades of gray. Therefore, his law contained no serious attempt to define the words "obscene," "lewd," "lascivious," or "indecent"—yet it was interpretations of these words that resulted in convictions.

Once the law was passed, Comstock began to make arrests. He started in the summer of 1868 on his spare time and by himself. It would be another four years before he would receive any organizational support. He arrested William Simpson, a newsdealer whom Comstock called "the worst man in New York,"³ on the charge of selling obscene books. This arrest would be the first of five for Simpson, who was subsequently sentenced to ten years' imprisonment at hard labor, and, upon his release, arrested by Comstock again in 1884 for selling Frank Tousey's *Young Men of America*. Comstock also arrested Charles Conroy on similar obscenity charges. Conroy was a one-handed man who would later make his living, when not in prison, selling Dick and Fitzgerald publications. Comstock also arrested him many times.⁴

Initially the courts paid little or no attention to Comstock's early arrests.⁵ Often the accused were married men with many children, so their families suffered grave financial hardships. In 1871 when Comstock arrested Simpson a second time, for instance, Simpson was sent to the Tombs in default of bail.⁶ His wife had to feed their six children as best she

*Paper presented at ACA conference, March, 1988, at New Orleans, LA, from a work in progress. Schurman's book on the dime novel publishing world, 1860-1915, is scheduled for publication by Greenwood Press in 1990.

could.

Comstock, however, remained unmoved. He was determined to uphold the law. "...Whenever a man breaks the laws," he wrote in his diary in 1871, "I will make him satisfy the laws' demands if in my power."⁷ In his zeal, Comstock even compared himself to Christ, writing in another diary entry that same year: "I... will if I feel and believe I am right stand firm. Jesus was never moved from the path of duty, however hard, by public opinion. Why should I be?"⁸

In May of 1872, the YMCA, impressed by Comstock's one-man campaign against vice, decided to form a committee within the organization to assist him. At Comstock's first meeting with the group, he was presented with a gift of \$500 in appreciation of his work.⁹ News of the establishment of the YMCA Committee Against Vice was well received. The following month, *The Publishers' Weekly* praised its inception: "...it has already shown its usefulness by arresting some of the most notorious obscene publishers and confiscating their stock ...; the flood of obscene publications that has been pouring upon the country of late, ought to be greatly lessened, if not entirely stopped."¹⁰

With his formal backing by the YMCA, Comstock intensified his campaign. He was instrumental in stiffening the Postal Law of 1865, which prohibited mails from carrying obscene publications.¹¹ He also vigorously continued his arrests. On August 24, 1872, he charged Charles E. Mackey, identified in the YMCA committee records as publisher of the *Fireside Companion*. Although this identification is incorrect, as George Munro was the publisher, Mackey, like Simpson and Conroy, probably was a newsdealer and bookseller, who sold the *Fireside Companion*, a story paper Comstock despised. Comstock charged Mackey with sending "obscene" books through the mails. As was his practice, Comstock had requested the books sent to him by using another name.¹² Because Mackey fell into the trap, his inventory was seized, he was required to pay \$5,000 bail, he had to wait to be tried for seven months, and was then sentenced to one year's imprisonment in the county jail and fined \$500.¹³

Comstock's next move was to go to Washington to urge a tighter penalty for sending obscene matter through the mails than the 1872 Post Office Statute required. After much finagling, several such bills before the legislature were merged, and Comstock got his wish on March 3rd, 1873. President Grant signed the bill the following day.¹⁴

Two months later, on May 16, 1873, the YMCA Committee Against Vice was incorporated as the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. Anthony Comstock, now twenty-eight, continued to lead the organization. He would, in fact, be its leader for forty-two more years, until he died in 1915.¹⁵ His salary of \$1950 for 1872 was raised to \$3,000 in 1873, and he received expenses "for detecting and punishing offenders and for destroying stock seized." In giving him the raise, the YMCA showed it believed as Comstock did that "a single book or a single picture may taint forever the soul of the person who reads or sees it."¹⁶

What was important about the Society, one scholar has noted, was that the rights of seizure, search, and arrest—always until now the exclusive domain of the police—were now powers given to the Society, a new idea in the administration of criminal law.¹⁷

Almost immediately after the incorporation of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, Comstock was made a Special Agent of the Post Office, another position that carried with it police powers.¹⁸ Armed with his new titles and authority, Comstock gave up his job in the dry goods business and devoted the rest of his life to hunting vice. From this time forward until after the outbreak of World War I, his acts of suppression

and censorship influenced American social history.

Analysing Comstock's character, his biographer, Heywood Broun, commented that Comstock, a sincere and passionate reformer, neither knew nor cared about beauty. In his view, however, anything connected with sex was "obscene," and he genuinely believed that moral devastation, death, and damnation followed viewing nudity or the reading of a ribald story. As-tutely Broun remarked that Comstock never understood that "To forbid is to underline."¹⁹

Comstock continued his work with zeal. In June of 1873 he was instrumental in the passage of still another New York obscenity law; this one lumped with obscene matter all items having to do with contraception and abortion. Within the first six months of this latest Comstock law, Comstock bragged that he had seized 194,000 obscene pictures and photographs, 134,000 pounds of books, 14,200 stereo plates and so forth. He liked to measure his victories in numerical terms.

His arrests were legion. Newsdealer William Simpson was apprehended over and over again, until finally on October 20, 1874, he was fined \$5,000 and sentenced to ten years' hard labor in prison.²⁰ Two years later, on February 19, 1876, George Small, then a Brooklyn publisher, was arrested for publishing *Wild Oats*, a "beastly" paper—according to Comstock—with "obscene" pictures.²¹ Small, later a partner of Frank Tou-sey's, would also become the author of "Peter Pad," "Bricktop," and "Billy the Bootblack."

In one melodramatic arrest that Comstock made of a saloonkeeper in New Canaan, Connecticut,—near where Comstock was born—the justice of the peace, assuredly much to Comstock's horror, compared Comstock's actions to those that occur in dime novels. Said the justice: "Anthony's ambitious, you know; likes to be noticed; been readin' dime novels, I calculate."²²

Some of Comstock's most heated battles in the dime novel world were with publisher Frank Tousey, whom Comstock described as "an alarm to the present generation."²³ According to the Society for the Suppression of Vice Papers Comstock called at Tousey's office to buy the file of *The Boys Leader* and *The Nightside Library*.

The clerks received their instructions from the man in the office, who knew Comstock and would not sell either [file] and the doors were locked.

Afterwards the same man in charge visited Comstock's office, and said he understood he had been down to see Mr. Tousey, and that he represented him, etc. Comstock politely informed him that as he was present in the office and instructed clerks what to do, and they had informed him that neither Mr. Tousey nor his representative were in, that he could not have anything to do with him, for if he could not represent Mr. Tousey in his own office, he certainly could not in his [Comstock's] office.²⁴

According to these records, these "libraries"—which Comstock continued to attack in his speeches throughout the country—were suppressed in the Fall of 1880.

Four years later, on March 3, 1884, Comstock went after Frank Tousey again, this time for publishing the *Brookside Library*, which Comstock considered to be improper stories of London court life. The Tombs Squad arrested Tousey and seized his books, which were by G.W.M. Reynolds and published in parts. The books, 213 bundles in all, each bundle containing 100 copies, weighed 6,485 pounds. All were sent to police headquarters. They included: 98 bundles of *Rose Lambert*; 33 bundles of *Rose Foster*; 27 bundles of *Caroline of Brunswick*; 30 bundles of *Venetia Trelawney*; 10 bundles of *Sarah Barnshaw*; 10 bundles of *Court of London*; and 1 bundle of

each of these: *Vivette*, *Ellen Perch*, *Fatal Conquest*, *Aprinia*, and *Child of Waterloo*.

Although Tousey was released on \$1,000 bail, he was examined on more than fourteen different dates from March 22nd through December 10th. During one private examination in the Tombs Prison, he said he was only printing what had been sold in more expensive—though not less offensive—form for thirty years. Witnesses in the case included Comstock and Tousey's employees.

In the final decision, Comstock agreed to drop the prosecution if Tousey destroyed the plates of thirty-two books at his publishing house. Tousey agreed, and on December 11th and 12th he did so. Comstock then destroyed all the books at police headquarters over a two day period in mid-December. Despite vigorous objections of counsel, two of Tousey's clerks were fined \$600 each.²⁵

Three months later, on March 14, 1885, Tousey declared bankruptcy, a step caused in no small measure by Comstock's attacks on his sales of *Brookside Library* and *Young Men of America*.²⁶

While Comstock continued to pursue newsdealers and publishers, he also turned his hand to writing; his written attacks on the dime novel publishing world were as vigorous as his arrests. In one vitriolic attack after another, he held story papers and dime novels responsible for all crimes committed by young people. These charges by Comstock—backed as he was by such prestigious forces as the YMCA and the Post Office Department—did more than any other source to turn public sentiment against 19th-century story papers and dime novels. Leading figures who supported him in the YMCA included such prominent men as philanthropist Morris K. Jessup and banker J. Pierpont Morgan. Behind Comstock's Post Office Department badge stood the authority of the United States Government. With such backing, it apparently was unimportant if Comstock never proved his repeated allegation that reading this popular fiction immediately drove young people to commit crimes. What was important was that he said it over and over again until people believed him and came to view such reading as severely damaging to their young.

On January 15, 1880, Comstock's Sixth Annual Report of the Society for the Suppression of Vice was presented in New York. It delivered a scathing attack on boys' story papers and dime novels. It described story papers as "stories of criminal life" whose leading characters were young criminals "who revel in the haunts of iniquity." Throughout the tales ran a "vein of licentiousness" which debased the minds of the young. The report warned that "Read before the intellect is quickened...they educate our youth in all the odious features of crime." Dime novels were characterized as filled with "demoralizing venom"; the report exhorted parents and teachers to "Be sure that the imagery and seeds of moral death are not in our houses and schools."²⁷

In *Frauds Exposed*, Comstock's first book which was written this same year, Comstock repeated his theme. He discussed story papers and dime novels in a chapter entitled "Obscene Publications." Because of them, he insisted, "Our Court rooms are thronged with infant criminals—baby felons."²⁸ He went on for two pages to cite "facts"—ten cases which purported to prove crime was the result of reading boys' papers. His first "fact" is representative. Once when Comstock arrested a nineteen-year-old for sending obscene matter through the mails, he went to the boy's house and there:

the Agent found a mass of these Boys' Papers piled up in one corner. no sooner had they been discovered than the prisoner started back, exclaiming with great force, "There, there's the cause of my ruin—

that has cursed me and brought me to this!"²⁹

According to Comstock, dime novels were responsible for everything from the opening of college libraries to the encouragement of self-abuse. A college president wrote him in 1872:

Eight years ago dime novels were an unsufferable nuisance. We have practically put a stop to it [reading dime novels] by opening a reading room, well supplied with interesting periodical literature, and by keeping [the] college library open during hours of vacation.³⁰ Another of Comstock's correspondents characterized dime novels and story papers as:

a great curse in producing the ruinous habit of self-abuse among the youth of our country...I am forced to the conviction that not less than 75 per cent of our youths from 12 to 18 years of age, are more or less the victims of this soul, mind, and body destroying vice.

Once again Comstock offered no proof, simply a correspondent's opinion.

Comstock's Eighth Annual Report presented in New York two years later, on February 6, 1882, reviled story papers once more. They "create an appetite for publications of a grosser type...The hero is usually armed with a knife and revolver and shoots at sight." He went on to describe the stories as having "no literary merit," but "educating thousands of boys to shame and crime."³¹

The following year, 1883, Comstock published his second book, *Traps for the Young*. Two of the most evil traps, to which he devoted his third chapter, were "weekly death-traps," "sure-ruin" traps—dime novels, story papers, and "libraries,"—or "vermin" which consumed "the finest fruits of civilization"—boys and girls.³² In the chapter Comstock described his first reading of George Munro's *Fireside Companion*, as appalling although he did not mention it by name but teased instead, "Let every candid reader say...whether or no this is a fit 'companion' for the 'fireside'." He was shocked that a "high-toned" paper consisted of such "violations" as plots which had:

a conspiracy against a school-girl, one girl hired to personate a rich girl and marry a villain in her stead; a man murdered by being blown up by explosives; a beautiful girl, by lying and deceit, seeks to captivate one whom she loves; six assaults upon an officer while resisting arrests....³³

He was irate because such tales as these, he insisted, encourage parental disobedience, "breed vulgarity...render the imagination unclean, destroy domestic peace...make foul-mouthed bullies...and make real life a drudge and burden."³⁴

Four years later, on January 26, 1886, his Twelfth Annual Report made the connection between story papers and youthful criminals. "The seed sown in past years is bearing its fruit," the report stated, and there followed detailed charts showing that from 1882 through 1885 all crimes had greatly increased. The cause of this phenomenon Comstock, of course, attributed to the reading of dime novels and story papers. He offered no proof, no connection; it was another one of his "facts."³⁵

In 1891 Comstock was at it again; this time he attacked story papers, dime novels, and "libraries" in an article entitled "Vampire Literature" in the *North American Review*. In it Comstock declared:

Better that our youth be taken up by their parents to the sinks of iniquity and dens of vice, and their finer sensibilities shocked by the realities of crime, than that their fancies shall be taught fantastic scenes from these sensational and vivid descriptions of the purlieu of sin and shame.³⁶

In order to demonstrate the vast amount of this "criminal literature," he cited the Society's seizure of "six tons' weight of books and plates...in a single office of one of these criminal story-paper publishers."³⁷

For his Twenty-third Annual Report on January 19, 1897, the year of his twenty-fifth anniversary as leader of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, there appeared under a heading of the report entitled "Blood and Thunder Stories," another "Tabular Statement." This one showed the number of young people under twenty-one arrested for various crimes: 49 burglaries, 28 petty larcenies, 16 highway robberies and so forth. The report in no way established the connection between the crimes and "vampire fiction" other than the placement of this "Tabular Statement" under the heading of "Blood and Thunder Stories."³⁸ Nevertheless, this is an excellent example of Comstock's technique.

Although various liberal and freethinking societies formed and reacted against Comstock, despite the fact that he was severely criticized by some ministers and judges, although people tried to assault him physically or sent him explosives, sulphuric acid and smallpox scabs through the mails, Comstock remained undaunted. He sailed through the years absolutely confident in the rightness of his cause, his divine inspiration, and his role as savior of the nation's young. The fact that approximately three out of every four arrests he made led to convictions indicates others shared his view. As a District Attorney once remarked during the Comstock era, "The United States is one great society for the Suppression of Vice."³⁹

ENDNOTES

¹John Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*, 2 vols. (New York: R.R. and Co., 1975), II, 611.

²Tebbel, II, 611; Heywood Broun and Margaret Leech, *Anthony Comstock, Roundsman of the Lord* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1927), 82.

³New York Society for the Suppression of Vice Collection, 8 vols., Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 1871-1920s, I, 4. Hereafter referred to as the NYSSV Collection.

⁴Mortimer DeRobigne Bennett, *Anthony Comstock: His Career of Cruelty and Crime* (New York: DeCapo Press, 1971), 1034.

⁵New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, Tenth Annual Report, January 22, 1884, 8.

⁶NYSSV Collection, I, 3-4.

⁷Robert Bremner, "Introduction," reprint of Anthony Comstock's *Traps for the Young* (Cambridge: Belknap Press Harvard University, 1967), x.

⁸Broun, 15.

⁹Charles Gallaudet Trumbull, *Anthony Comstock, Fighter* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1913), 80-81.

¹⁰*The Publishers' Weekly*, June 13, 1872, 558.

¹¹Broun, 88.

¹²NYSSV Collection, I, 11-12; Bremner, "Introduction," *Traps*, xx.

¹³NYSSV Collection, I, 11-12, August 24, 1872.

¹⁴Trumbull, *Comstock*, 93-101.

- ¹⁵Bremner, "Introduction," *Traps*, xiv.
- ¹⁶Bremner, "Introduction," *Traps*, xi.
- ¹⁷Morris L. Ernst and William Seagle, *To the Pure...A Study of Obscenity and the Censor* (New York: The Viking Press, 1928), 11.
- ¹⁸Tebbel, II, 612.
- ¹⁹Broun, 270.
- ²⁰NYSSV Collection, I, 44, October 21, 1874.
- ²¹NYSSV Collection, I, 63-64, February 10, 1876.
- ²²Bremner, "Introduction," *Traps*, 22; quoting from *New York Tribune*, January 22, 1878.
- ²³NYSSV Collection, I, 145.
- ²⁴NYSSV Collection, I, 145-146.
- ²⁵All details about Comstock and Tousey in 1884 are from NYSSV Collection, I, 269-270, March 3, 1884.
- ²⁶*The Publishers' Weekly*, March 21, 1885.
- ²⁷NYSSV Sixth Annual Report, January 15, 1880, 6 and 11.
- ²⁸Anthony Comstock, *Frauds Exposed; or, How the People are Deceived and Robbed, and Youth Corrupted* (New York: J. Howard Brown, 1880), 437.
- ²⁹Comstock, *Frauds*, 43.
- ³⁰Comstock, *Frauds*, 440 for this quotation and the next.
- ³¹NYSSV Eighth Annual Report, February 6, 1882, 7.
- ³²Comstock, *Traps*, 21.
- ³³Comstock, *Traps*, 22.
- ³⁴Comstock, *Traps*, 25.
- ³⁵NYSSV Twelfth Annual Report, January 26, 1886, 10-11.
- ³⁶Anthony Comstock, "Vampire Literature," *North American Review*, (1891), 152, 164.
- ³⁷Comstock, "Vampire Literature," 164.
- ³⁸NYSSV Twenty-third Annual Report, January 13, 1897, 19.
- ³⁹Bremner, "Introduction," *Traps*, xxix; quoting from Broun, 89.

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MORE NOTES ON THE ALGER BIBLIOGRAPHY

By Gary Scharnhorst

Victor Berch's article, "Further Additions and Corrections to Horatio Alger's Short Stories and Poetry," in the August *Dime Novel Roundup*, has prompted me to dig through some old notes on printings of Alger's short fiction which I've accumulated over the past three or four years. Most of them, here listed for the first time, appeared in the *Boston Globe* newspaper, where Alger also serialized a number of juvenile novels in the 1880s and 1890s. Let me emphasize my examination of the *Globe* is not exhaustive; frankly, I have neither the time nor the particular inclination to complete it. Perhaps Berch or another researcher will undertake a careful search through the paper. I've taken the liberty of listing below several stories appearing under the name "Caroline F. Preston." As both Berch and Stanley Pachon acknowledge, there is no conclusive proof that Alger used this signature. However, I am increasingly convinced by the circumstantial evidence. As Pachon noted in February, 1988, "Sally Sparks, Spinster," appeared in the *Globe* under the Caroline F. Preston pseudonym in 1890; in all, I note five other stories in the *Globe* under this name, two of them apparently new. I underscore here the importance of the point: "Caroline F. Preston" stories appeared in *Young Israel*, *Home Circle*, various Gleason periodicals, and the *Boston Globe* during the same periods Alger was contributing to these papers under his own name. It makes more sense to identify Alger as "Caroline F. Preston" than to try to account otherwise for these coincidences.

1. "Charleie Dean's Success," by Horatio Alger, Jr., *Boston Sunday Globe*, June 24, 1888, 20:4-5 (a reprinting, obviously, of "Charles Dean's Success").
2. "Earl Spencer's Bride; or, The Managing Mother," by Caroline F. Preston, *Boston Sunday Globe*, June 29, 1890, 19:1-2.
3. "The Face at the Window. A New Year's Story," by Horatio Alger, Jr., *Boston Sunday Globe*, January 1, 1888, 20:1-3.
4. "Frightening a Lover," by Caroline F. Preston, *Boston Sunday Globe*, March 2, 1890, 20:7-8.
5. "A Hard Alternative," by Caroline F. Preston, *Boston Sunday Globe*, April 20, 1890, 20:5-6.
6. "The Leap-Year Ball," by Caroline F. Preston, *Boston Sunday Globe*, July 20, 1890, 19:1-2.
7. "The Managing Wife," by Horatio Alger, Jr., *Boston Sunday Globe*, July 8, 1888, 20:6-7.
8. "Paul Jenkins. A Tale of Love and Hair Dye," by Caroline F. Preston, *Boston Sunday Globe*, July 6, 1890, 19:1-2.
9. "Walter Gordon's Resolution," by Horatio Alger, Jr., *Christian Secretary*, November 23, 1876, p. 4.

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FURTHER NOTES ON ALGER SHORT STORIES

By Edward T. LeBlanc

In preparing a bibliography of the Merriwells, I compiled a list of the short stories that appeared in *Tip Top Weekly*. Here I discovered a few more reprintings of Alger short stories. What makes these significant

is the fact that the publishers, Street & Smith, ascribe "authors" other than Alger to two of the stories.

The following is a list of short stories by Alger that appeared in *Tip Top* and *New Tip Top Weeklies*:

1. The Clifton Mortgage, by Horatio Alger, Jr., *New Tip Top Weekly*, #56.
2. One Good Indian, by Horatio Alger, Jr., *Tip Top Weekly*, #812.
3. Tommy's Adventure, by Horatio Alger, Jr., *Tip Top Weekly*, #617.
4. The Boy Substitute, by T. R. Burr, *Tip Top Weekly*, #779.
5. The Boy Scout, by Alton Horace, *Tip Top Weekly*, #767.

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A DIME NOVEL COLLECTOR'S BOOK SHELF

DEADLY EXCITEMENTS, by Robert Sampson. Bowling Green University Popular Press, Bowling Green, OH 43403, \$17.95 in paper, \$33.95 in cloth. Another great book on the pulps by the master connoisseur of pulp literature. Here he examines some of the lesser known pulps such as *Scotland Yard*, *The Scarlet Adventuress*, as well as some of the more long-lived ones such as *Phantom Detective*, *Doc Savage*, *The Shadow*, *The Spider*, and many others.

RHETORICAL POWER, by Steven Mailloux. Cornell University Press, 124 Roberts Place, Ithaca, NY 14850, \$8.95 in paper, \$24.95 in cloth. This is a scholarly work for students and teachers of literature. Of interest to dime novel collectors is a discussion of "bad-boy" literature such as HUCKLEBERRY FINN and dime novels.

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC RAMBLES NO. 6 — EDWARD STRATEMEYER

By Peter C. Walther

We can well imagine the Almighty wrestling with a knotty problem. We can also imagine Saint Peter offering some advice: "You see, with the Rover Boys well on their way to success and Dave Porter some years in the future and now that the Spanish-American War has reached its welcome end, You really cannot leave the Russell brothers and Gilbert Pennington high and dry with nothing to do. I hardly think we need provide the Earth people with yet another skirmish as they really seem to be doing quite well by themselves on that score. However I'm sure Ed Stratemeyer of Newark would scarcely take it amiss if you were to provide him with some further examples of the futility of armed warfare..." We realize that this is indeed a flippant interpretation of global history, yet the Boxer Rebellion and the Russo-Japanese War occurred in convenient season for Edward Stratemeyer and his corps of fictional characters. And let me also apologize to those readers who find all these historical interpretations tedious and possibly boring; yet I do feel that some of the juvenile writers we read and collect (and yes, admire) can stand the scrutiny of the historical frameworks within which they labored.

The Cuban theatre of the Spanish-American War was over by July 3, 1898, while in the Philippines it was not until the capture of Manila by U.S. troops the following month (August 13) that signalled its official end. We recall the three Russell brothers, Ben, Larry, and Walter, and their friend Gilbert Pennington, who spilled some blood but did not give up their lives for the glorious cause of U.S. victory. Stratemeyer was to continue the military exploits of Ben and Larry, and Gilbert as well, in the following manner:

Matters were fast coming to a head in China. The nationalists of that country decided that they had had enough of foreign influences and domination, and felt that if they were to maintain the order of their lives that had been undisturbed for centuries violent measures must be taken to uphold the Chinese commercial and territorial integrity. Hence the Boxer Rebellion. In order to drive out the "foreign devils" these Boxers, violent nationalists who had the secret support of the Empress, initiated a reign of terror. They occupied Peking in June, 1900, and besieged the British legation and a Catholic Church where approximately 900 foreigners had taken refuge. The relief of these inmates who were quartered in Gordon Hall was finally accomplished by an international military force on the following August 14, at which time the Boxers were driven out of Peking. (But as history so often shows us "they did not live happily ever after;" that is another story.) We can read about all this in Stratemeyer's *ON TO PEKIN*, which relates the events occurring during that fateful summer. The author's Preface was dated October 4, 1900, so the events must still have been fresh in the minds of his reading public. This is certainly a rousing adventure story and reads very well, yet what bothers me is Stratemeyer's attitude toward the Chinese. They were not a bunch of mindless ignorant idiots; they knew what they were doing and were fighting for what they felt was right. A few examples will serve: "Poor fellows! it's a good deal of a pity to fight them," he murmured. "They really don't know what they are doing. I suppose, in their way, they imagine they are quite in the right." (page 135), or; "Civilization is going to move on; and China must move, too, or take the consequences." (page 162). Hardly an enlightened attitude, yet whether we can or should apologize for the acts of our ancestors is quite another matter.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch. Another war was conveniently brewing

and Stratemeyer was able to bring back both Gilbert Pennington and two of the three Russell brothers into the fracas. Russia and Japan were not "behaving themselves" to use one of the author's pet expressions and so he sent "Newark's finest" to aid the Japanese war interests. Of course after reading any stray chapter one realizes that the Japanese just *had* to win; they were the good guys, of course, and Stratemeyer paints corresponding character portraits. These books constitute a mini-series of three volumes which are as good as anything the author ever penned. The first, *UNDER THE MIKADO'S FLAG*, places events between circa February 1, 1904 to the end of August; we read of the Battles of the Yalu and Liao-Yang. The second, *AT THE FALL OF PORT ARTHUR*, carries us from late summer, 1904, to January 1, 1905. It is a basic adventure yarn woven around the siege, bombardment and actual fall of Port Arthur. Interestingly when the first book went to press towards the end of 1904 Port Arthur had not yet fallen, and so the next book to follow was initially advertised on page 304 as "At the Siege of Port Arthur." I wonder if the title was ever corrected in subsequent editions? Once again the Almighty knew what He was doing as a "Fall" is better press copy for a book than a "Siege." Finally (and Russia had to be whipped sooner or later), *UNDER TOGO FOR JAPAN* occurs in 1905: from January to the end of May, from the fall of Port Arthur to the end of the war, including the Battle of Mukden. Admiral Togo figures "more or less prominently," to use another Stratemeyerism, and we bid a final farewell to Gilbert Pennington and the Russells. It is my opinion that not much juvenile material has been written on this "splendid little war" and so we are fortunate in that Stratemeyer was able to devote three volumes to it. Events had fallen fast and furious: at the beginning of 1904 the Japanese were facing the vexing question of territorial rights in the Liao-tung Peninsula. Nothing starts a war faster than a wrangle over real-estate. By May, 1905, it was all over and Japan was reckoned an international power.

It is apparent to me anyway that with these four volumes Edward Stratemeyer really hit his stride as a historical novelist: he struck a good pace, unifying it with sound narrative flow and instructional back-grounds, combining it with compelling melodrama and sympathetic characterizations. Although I like the six Spanish-American War books very much, there seems an overabundance of historical fact, a textbookish atmosphere that I cannot dispel. The adventures are all very good but they come at a premium. With these other four books Stratemeyer appeared to concentrate on the exciting elements of his plots and threw in the historical data for good measure, and we are not the poorer for it. The actual events as they occurred presented a rich and variegated background for the more intricately worked out (and let's face it, more interesting) exploits of the author's protagonists. It is a literary shifting of gears which we as the readers must execute if we attempt to read all ten books in logical order but the results prove just as satisfying as ever they did with the antics of the Rovers, Dan Baxter, and that glorious tyrant Josiah Crabtree. Yet one very disturbing afterthought remains.

We well recall Basil Rathbone as Pontius Pilate saying to Preston Foster in the classic *LAST DAYS OF POMPEII*: "What is Truth?" Taking another tack, what then is War? Is it as glorious as some novelists would have us believe? Has the Viet Nam conflict and all the horrors now occurring daily in the world around us altered our perceptions of armed conflict? Can we toss off the contemporary accounts of Lebanon, Panama, and Iran with panache and unconcern? The author, in what must be one of the classic understatements of all time, informs us that "War, at its best, is a terrible thing; and the less our country has of it, the better

it will be for our people," (ON TO PEKIN, page iv). And again on page 201 of the same volume: "I see that our marines are getting ready to move," replied the young lieutenant. "I wish we were going with them. I am tired of doing nothing but guard duty." "Don't fret. We have still plenty of fighting before us," was the captain's REASSURING answer, [my caps.] Is War a noble hobby, where killing and fighting are acceptable pastimes and are to be much preferred over "guard duty?" After all, the Russo-Japanese War was not an American conflict, and Stratemeyer's characters were fighting there because they *wanted* to. Was the author but voicing the spirit of the times? I don't know, but other distressing examples abound. Here are a few of them:

"Have you seen any of the fighting?" questioned Larry, his eyes bright with anticipation. (MIKADO, page 136)

"What prompted you to join the Japanese army?" "The love of fighting, as much as anything." (MIKADO, page 247)

"This is almost as exciting as being in a war," said Larry, when he was on duty with Luke. (PORT ARTHUR, page 93)

"Russia is more free today than she ever was before, and freedom is bound to come sooner or later—that is, I mean, not such freedom as we have in the United States, but such freedom as they have in England and Germany—where, at least, a man can call his soul his own," (PORT ARTHUR, page 125). [In 1904 how did English freedom differ from American freedom?]

As often happens with the best of soldiers, Gilbert had been a bit timid at the very start of the contest. But the sight of the men blown to pieces by the shell caused his hot, Southern fighting blood to surge through his veins, and he waved his sword over his head. (TOGO, pages 139-140)

I am not a philosopher, historian, nor a strategist of any kind, but somehow I find these passages disturbing. Maybe I'm overextending my thought processes a bit, but these "rah-rah," simplistic, flag-waving panegyrics just don't go down. One wonders if the author really believed all this malarkey himself: that if HE were staring down the muzzles of the guns of an advancing horde, would his prose have been quite so cavalier and matter-of-fact? None of this is the issue here I suppose, but certainly any reader of these books cannot help but be aware of it, and one must be a moron indeed to accept these primitive platitudes after the passing of almost an entire century.

In spite of these rather depressing extracts I still think that all in all Edward Stratemeyer can well be proud of himself. Between 1898 and 1905 there occurred three separate conflicts almost one right after the other, and the author gave us a total of ten stories to savor. He took advantage of world conditions, waved his magic wand and, presto! out of his magic hat came ten books of which any author could be proud. And, if we remember our original rhetorical statement, do we indeed find the Almighty following the advice of Saint Peter?

You be the judge.

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THE LIVING ENDPAPERS

By John M. Enright

A decade ago, in his April, 1978, *Dime Novel Roundup* essay, "A Half Century of the Hardy Boys; or, Clues to an Obscure Chronology," Dr. Robert V. Riordan noted that the briefly brown, then orange endpapers (circa 1932 to 1957) portrayed "Frank and Joe hiding on a blufftop, watching men transporting boxes up a series of ladders from a boat in the river.... It was a scene that intimated a story of its own, smuggling perhaps, and was a scene of occasional but endless fascination. I have never been able to tie it to a scene in one of the books."

In this regard, it should be borne in mind that 1932 was the year that series artist Walter S. Rogers gave way to Clemens Gretter (tagged "Gretta" by Grosset & Dunlap Art Director Laura Harris and tracked down in the 1980s by *Dime Novel Roundup* member Fred Woodworth, who missed his chance at immortality when he failed on this occasion to say: "Dr. Gretter, I presume?") And 1932 also marked the debut of volume eleven, "The Hardy Boys: While the Clock Ticked." It seems clear that Mr. Gretter (who most recently did the new art work for the 1986 edition of John Blaine's Rick Brant adventure, "The Deadly Dutchman") was guided by the latest Hardy entry, not only in his illustration of the endpapers but also in his hardcover sketch depicting the anonymous detectives stealing across the grounds of the Purdy Estate: "The lightning flash had revealed the dark mass of the Purdy house not far distant among the trees.... They moved cautiously across the grounds." (pages 47, 48)

While volume two of this series, "The House on the Cliff" (1927), is somewhat similar to "While the Clock Ticked," only the latter really matches the Gretter endpapers, as we see when underpaid Canadian ghost-writer Leslie McFarlane gives the setting on page 96: "Although the Purdy Estate had a frontage on the Shore Road it also flanked Willow River, which emptied into Barmet Bay. It was this proximity to the river, obviously, which had made it ideal for the purposes of the river thieves. There was a small dock and a path leading up to the back of the house."

Over the years, the endpaper picture (like the volumes themselves) has seen its size shrink, its power fade, and its color disappear. Today, the public is offered nothing but a small, central sketch of the Hardy brothers, indifferently drawn, cheaply printed, no pride of workmanship in evidence. Going through the motions, after the fashion of some overage music hall performer, Grosset continues to bring out the books; but now, even as it long ago dumped the spine art of Mr. Gretter, it is consigning the cameos of the Hardy brothers and Nancy Drew which were done by Mr. Bill Gillies to history. The pleasant picture of Nancy Drew is being replaced by a flashlight; more appropriate, perhaps, would be a picture of a flash in a pan. However, I suppose that nothing lasts forever, except perhaps a fondness for stories from days of long ago, tales whose laughs and thrills brightened many a rainy afternoon.

Incidentally, I wrote this article ... while the clock ticked.

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